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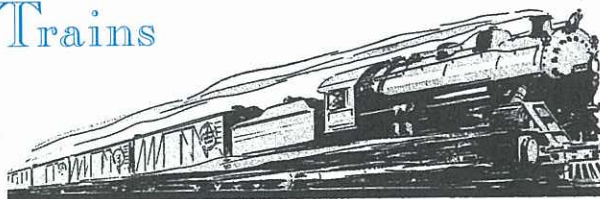
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Papa Lyman Remembers — Trains and University Presses

by **Lyman Newlin** (Book Trade Counsellor)
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Los Angeles, April 29, 1999

Before I direct your attention to some of the interesting projects of recent occurrence at university presses, I'd like to spend a little of your time suffering my perennial "preachment" about the joys of long-distance train travel.

This column originates in Los Angeles to which I've come to attend the annual meeting of the **American Booksellers Association** and to visit and trade gossip about the business of publishing information and knowledge by means of the printed word on sheets of paper (60 pound stock will generally be fine). Said sheets to be gathered and sewn, glued, or stapled into a more or less homogeneous group, then protected by a cover of heavier paper or cloth on cardboard. The finished product is called a "book."

I go into this wordy description because I am frequently overcome by the content of newsletters, newspapers, and journals directed at readers engaged in the profession of librarianship or bookselling. As this goes on, more reading material avoids the kind of thought transference I mention above. Contrarily, the articles are full of fancy-sounding words (Note I avoided "networking" in referring about to my desire to communicate with my peers in book publishing and bookselling.). I won't bore you with a lexicon of this phony language—you can sit up

late one night and come up with your own "Devil's Dictionary."

Now to the pleasure of riding the rails. After a half hour's drive, courtesy of our older son, Fred, I arrived at Amtrak's Depew Station serving the paltry number of Buffalonians who share my enthusiasm at 1:10 last Tuesday morning. The *Waterlevel Limited* arrived about twenty minutes late from New York City. The thirty or forty other passengers were boarded without shoving and electronic surveillance into coaches and sleepers ("Pullmans" to anyone born before the baby boomers). My small "bedroom," as the one-time termed "roomette" is now called, was equipped with proper hygienic and comfort accoutrements. Admittedly, the sleeping accommodation was considerably less than king-size, but certainly provided my ancient physique with seven hours of pleasant slumber. I skipped the available proper train breakfast but enjoyed the kitchen-prepared luncheon (sans pretzels or Goldfish) at tables decked with crisp white linen, decent flatware, and glasses and no possible intrusion from a forward-seated passenger altering his/her lean-back seat into my dining domain.

A few hours spent in Chicago's Union Station passed soon enough. It's hard to believe that this grand old building with its Great Hall is nearing its centenary. I can claim usage for most of those years. My first visit was as a

two-year-old being transported from our home in Bureau County, Illinois to my mother's family home in Vernon County, Missouri. The trip in 1912 from Chicago to Kansas City was made, I believe, via the CB&Q (Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy). From Kansas City to Fort Scott, KS (eight miles from the Kansas-Missouri state line) I believe it was the "KATY". On my trip this week, it was the *Southwest Chief*, Amtrak's Chicago to Los Angeles heir to the several "Chiefs" of the Santa Fe midcentury glory days. The *Southwest Chief* had used the CB&Q trackage to Western Illinois before it switched to the old Santa Fe route. This ride on the Chief was especially gratifying because it was through the town of my birth on the CB&Q trackage—and thereafter it hit its own rail and traveled through the town where I spent two years at the now defunct College of Emporia—and continued through several towns where college friends now reside or rest in peace (in most cases). I'll leave the train travel talk for now only to remark that the ensuing two days were spent in viewing our native land from ground level—enjoying good train food, reading, and preparing for calling on about 40 publishers' booths at BEA on behalf of **Fred Gullette's Book News**. My return trip from the Northwest was on the 1953 recreated *Silver and Blue Canadian* from Vancouver to Toronto. This is probably the greatest train and train ride in North America: from the Pacific through the Canadian Rockies; through the Prairies and the top of the Great Lakes.

Now to the story of what's happening at some university presses. I'll start with Kansas because, as you surmised, the Santa Fe main line runs through Lawrence, site of the University. The Santa Fe, in addition to transporting students to and from KU in the pre-airline days played a role in the story of the University's acquisition of the **Ralph Ellis** great collection of ornithology literature and ephemera. I recounted this story in *ATG* November 1998, p. 78. Before I turn attention to the **University Press of Kansas**, I must reveal that my interest this time was piqued by a story titled "Amazing Grace" by **Laura Secor** in *Lingua Franca*, Spring, 1999. Instinctively, the first thing I look for in *Lingua Franca* is always its "Inside Publishing." What a surprise to see this purveyor of things academic attending to "Peyton Place" by **Grace Metalious**. For this story about "Peyton," you'll have to look it up in the aforementioned

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student are separated." **John Hare** at New Hampshire Technical Institute says his school's definition is: "Educational processes wherein the learner is physically separated from the instructor. Instruction will provide the means to bring the two together: electronically, by email, fax, or US mail. There is limited instructor contact 3-4 times during the semester. Students come to campus to meet as a group a few times a semester for three-hour blocks."

Last December, *The New York Times* quoted Sociology Professor, **Lynn D. Nelson** of Virginia Commonwealth as follows: "I have two classes right now, and they are both using the Web intensively. One class has 300 students, and the other has 40. In the large class, the students each write 12 essays and pose questions to each other on the Web. They interact with each other every week, and they can do it on their own time. The level of their

activity is inconceivable in a normal class. I see a big difference from before the technology was introduced."

A further insight into distance learning is reflected in the efforts of the **Copyright Office's** project, "Promotion of Distance Learning Education Through Digital Technologies." When Congress passed the **Digital Millennium Copyright Act** the legislation called for the Copyright Office to hold hearings in January and February of this year. The hearings were to consider the role to be played by voluntary guidelines such as the **Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia** (sometimes referred to as the **Consortium of College and University Media Centers (CCUMC)**). We will report on the findings of the hearings at a later date.

We have not heard the last of this issue. 

See related article on Distance Learning in this issue of Against The Grain — p.28.

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article. My interest was in the reason for a university press reviving this book which came closer than any other to cause millions in the fifties and sixties to come as close as they ever had been to reading (or believing they had been reading) a pornographic book.

Secor credits **Ardis Cameron**, a **University of Southern Maine American Studies** professor, with being the motivator behind the **North-eastern University Press** reissue. In discussing the matter with **William A. Frolich**, Northeastern Press director, I soon gathered that Professor Cameron's interest was in **Metaliouis** as a pillar of the feminist movement because of her frank treatment of such tenets as divorce, birth control, etc. Frolich, as a publisher, pondered the mystery as to why a novel with one of the twentieth century sales records (over eleven million copies) could be out of print. He knew that there would be text book adoptions, thanks to Dr. Cameron. But this university press director is one who is not so set on the notion that sales over five thousand copies are not to be counted on by his niche in publishing. Thus he finds himself the producer of a fifteen thousand copy seller which he will probably keep in print indefinitely.

The conversation with Bill Frolich also prompted an inquiry into what, if anything,

other university presses are doing about bringing back into circulation their own or other noteworthy out-of-print titles. This inquisitiveness was fortified by my having witnessed some of the recent instant-book manufacturing processes plus increasing reports from publishers' production experts who are excited about the economy of short-instant print runs.

Fred Woodward, friend of long-standing and director of the university press which stands high above the Santa Fe tracks along the Kansas River in Lawrence, has had success with another kind of title—a contemporary one with subject matter about 179 degrees from Northeastern's **Metaliouis**. It is **Ernie Pyle's War** by **James Tobin**, originally published (in cloth, of course) by Simon and Schuster in 1997. S&S, after some megapub soul searching, decided to approach another publisher about an almost simultaneous paperback reprint. Why did they go to a medium-sized (and tiny in comparison to S&S) university press? Here is Fred's answer: "It came to us because of our list in modern war studies." This series resulted from Woodward's observation not long after he came to Kansas from Charleston's neighbor, the **University of South Carolina Press**, that Kansas lacked an identity in the world of academic publishing. To establish a niche, this press director decided to introduce a series of modern war studies, a non-popular subject in

competing scholarly publishing circles. A 1985 title by **Forrest McDonald**, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, was a Pulitzer Prize finalist about Dwight Eisenhower, primarily because it reflected modern scholarship on a character about whom it seemed improbable to find more biographical material. In May, 1995, a Kansas book made the cover of *New York Times Book Review*. It was *Presidential War Power* by **Louis Fisher**. The above two are only partly the reason **Kansas' Modern War Series** has received kudos from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, **Harvard University Press** director, **Bill Sisler**, **The History Book Club**, et al. Other titles that have won praise from peer publishers and libraries deal with the Union soldier in war, the Presidency of Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, etc. etc. It was not a fluke which led Simon & Schuster to take its Ernie Pyle title to the University of Kansas Press for paperback publishing. It was professional recognition.

As I write this, I am awaiting word from other university presses about their reprinting activities. First among which will be the **University of Ohio Press** with whose director, **David Sanders**, I recently had a most interesting conversation about his knowledge of one of my all-time favorites: *RFD* by **Charles Allen Smart**, which I read at the suggestion of Norton's great sales manager, **Storer Lunt**, at the time of its original publication in 1938. So many reminiscences. So little time! 🌿



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